7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWII Kerala AWII
Tiyyar
[South Malabar and Cochin]

presence of *enangar*. The young children of a divorced woman might return with her to her brother's house, but had the right to go back before puberty to their fathers' house.

In this system the husbands obtain both sexual and procreative rights in their wife, her children becoming members of their patrilineal group. The wife herself does not, however, as among Brahmans, become wholly incorporated as a member of her husband's lineage. A sonless widow whose husband left no brothers had no rights to property or maintenance by his family; she must return to her brother's house. She could not, as among Brahmans, adopt on behalf of her husband or temporarily manage his property in the absence of adult kinsmen. Though her children belong to the husband's group, the wife appears as in North Malabar to be only temporarily 'leased' by the husbands, on payments of the *kānam* sum, for her sexual and domestic services.

Moreover, though a woman cannot inherit property in her natal *taravād*, the bond between brother and sister remains strong. The eldest brother is early regarded as the guardian of his sisters, who observe partial avoidance and respect to him much as in a Nayar *taravād*. It is significant that at divorce, a woman is returned to her brother, not to her father or the headman of her patrilineal group. At the death of a married woman, her brothers and their children observe pollution in their own dwelling-group, assembling at the deceased's conjugal house on the sixteenth day for final rites to the spirit. At the death of a man, his sisters' sons have pollution, assemble at his house, and in the sixteen days of mourning perform offerings to the spirit immediately after the deceased's sons, and before his younger brothers and paternal grandchildren. At the death of a man, his sisters and daughters make offerings to an image of the deceased on the fourteenth day, but the widow herself (unlike the Brahman widow) takes no part in death rites. This shows the strong tie persisting between a married woman and her natal group, and the comparative lack of integration into the group of the women who marry its men. The former existence of exogamous matrilineal clans underlines this persistence of the bond between women and their natal kinsfolk, especially their brothers.[1]

The Tiyyar Tāli-*Rite*. A girl's *tāli* was tied before puberty by a boy, usually a small child, of some local *taravād*, affinal or unrelated, into which the girl might marry. My informants in Cochin and Walluvanād could not remember the details of the rite, which has died out in the last twenty years. They knew that it must be done before puberty, and that the *tāli*-tier sometimes married the girl after puberty by the usual ceremonies.

According to Thurston & Rangachari (1909, VII, pp. 80–1), who describe the rite in Chavakkad, between Calicut and Cochin, Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909–12, I, pp. 285–7) who describes it for Cochin, and Aiyappan (1944, pp. 159–60) for the whole central area, the horoscopes were compared as for a marriage. The artisans provided an arrow and a brass mirror which the girl carried in her hand, a plank of the milk-tree, the rouge-bottle which figures in the eight auspicious objects, and a staff carried by the bridegroom. The local *Pānan* (a low caste of sorcerers and menial workers) brought a peacock-feather umbrella for the girl and a 'war umbrella' for the boy. A week in advance, the carpenter planted the south-east corner-post of the shed at an auspicious moment. For three days before the rites, the girl was secluded as if she had menstruated. On the day before the rites, she was taken to worship the sun, and was seated in the marriage-hall on a plank with a lit lamp, a vessel of water, rice, plantain-fruits, and a coconut before her. Her mother's brother's wife parted her hair and placed a gold coin on her crown, and the Tandan's wife (like the barber in North Malabar) anointed this three times with oil, here poured from a leaf of the *jak* tree. The girl took a ceremonial bath and was secluded in the house with a casket, a bell-metal mirror, and a sword on a stool beside her.

[1] The tie between sisters is also close. They and their children observe pollution for each others' deaths, and the sororate (forbidden among Nayars and North Malabar Tiyyars) sometimes confirms the status of the mother's sister as a proxy mother.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Tiyas

well as the unmarried women and girls lived in the house. The women who had married out had left and were living with the families of their husbands. What struck me was the considerable number of unmarried boys and girls relatively advanced in age who were still at home. Tiyas, I was told, marry late, usually after puberty, which is exceptional in India.

It will be noticed that polyandry was only practised in the elder generations. Not a single case occurs among the younger people. The reason for this is that the Thiyya Makkathayam Act of 1940 made polyandry illegal in Cochin, and nobody was thus at liberty to marry in this way any longer. Property, which was undivided so far, would be divided, Velu told us, when he and his brothers and his wife had died. This was in accordance with the new legislation, and all the children, girls included, would have a share. The boys, however, would be allotted double portions. Thus for their children by the two marriages, if the girls were not married by then, there would be thirteen shares, of which the boys would get the four first.

Velu assured me that formerly they were polyandrous in his caste so that the property should not be divided up. It kept the brothers together, they did not get involved in the quarrels of their wives, it was not necessary to split up into separate families, and thus was a very good system. Times, however, had changed, he said and now because there was a law forbidding polyandry, there was no longer any reason to keep what they owned undivided. He seemed to think that the old way of doing things had its advantages, especially in the possibility of bringing in another woman, if this were desirable and the brothers agreed to it (as he and his younger brothers had done), without being obliged to separate and start splinter households as had now become necessary. When I questioned him as to how they would keep going now that the economy of an undivided polyandrous household was no longer possible, he replied that it would oblige them to turn coolies, cut laterite, plough for others, carry on petty trade and emigrate to the towns.

On the 2nd of November 1949, I went again to Cochin accompanied by an interpreter. We drove into the Tallapilli taluk of the northern part of that state, and visited a village near Kunnamkulam, called Perumpillav (big jack fruit tree). The people living here called themselves "Ezhuvas", but, in accordance with recent Cochin legislation, they were assimilated to Tiyas or Thiyyas as the local spelling has it. (Article 5, paragraph i of the Thiyya *Makkathayam* Act of 1940 states that "Thiyya included *Ezhuva*, Chova, Billava, Marayan, Thandan and others recognized as such.")

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Thandans

It would appear, therefore, that, far from there being an excess of men, it is the other way round: there is a shortage of them. What happens then to the unmarried women? It was even more difficult to answer that question, as only a painstaking and lengthy investigation could do this. I enquired from my guides and interpreters, from those I interviewed, from officials and from fellow anthropologists, and the consensus of opinion, which I also share, is that the spinsters stay at home – with their parents, as long as they live, and with their brothers when the parents have died. The genealogies given above somewhat confirm this view, although perhaps not as decisively as one would like.

C. POLYANDRY IN A THANDAN FAMILY OF THE WALLUVANAD TALUK OF SOUTH MALABAR

While engaged in a general survey of polyandry in Kerala, in the course of which I came into contact with people of all sorts and conditions, in this complex State, it was not possible for me simultaneously to make a more special study of the distinctive features of the custom. At first, I really only obtained a superficial impression which, with time, I came to look upon as insufficient for me to speak with any authority on the polyandry practised by some of the distinctive castes and sub-castes of this south-west part of India.

Because I wanted to deepen my research and also out of a feeling that the opportunity to gather everything that I could while I was there should not be missed, I decided to choose one family from among those that I had already visited with my guides and interpreters, to put it under scrutiny and study its structure and activity in greater detail. Actually, I would have liked to have chosen one family in each caste or even sub-caste, but I soon realised that this meant work over a period of time far greater than I could possibly hope to have at my disposal in Kerala. So I resigned myself to enquiring where it was thought that I stood the best chance of making such a special study. I was advised to return to the Thandan family which I had first visited on the 25th and 26th of October, immediately after I had started to work in 1949. This family, it will be remembered, was called Appayl Wattakkeh, its *tarawad* had the same name, Appayl, and it was located about two miles outside the village of Ottappalam in the Walluvanad taluk of south Malabar.

The advantages of studying these people were numerous. They were close to where I lived, and to the residence of my interpreters. We had